

6. (New) A method for masking flavor and/or odor particular to an oral ingestible product by adding a masking agent according to claim 2.

7. (New) A method for masking flavor and/or odor particular to an oral ingestible product by adding a masking agent according to claim 3.

8. (New) A method for masking flavor and/or odor particular to an oral ingestible product by adding a masking agent according to claim 4.

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 are active in the present application. Claims 4 and 5 have been corrected to remove multiple dependencies. Claims 6-8 are new claims. Support for the new claims and the amended claims is found in the original claims. No new matter is added. An action on the merits and allowance of claims is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Norman F. Oblon
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 24,618

Daniel J. Pereira, Ph.D.
Registration No. 45,518



22850

(703) 413-3000
Fax #: (703) 413-2220
NFO/DJPER/SUKOS/js

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IN THE CLAIMS

--4. (Amended) A masking agent according to [any one of claims 1 to 3] claim 1, wherein the nontoxic salt of gluconic acid is an alkali metal salt or an alkali earth metal salt of gluconic acid.

5. (Amended) A method for masking flavor and/or odor particular to an oral ingestible product by adding a masking agent according to [any one of claims 1 to 4] claim 1.--

Claims 6-8 (New).

DESCRIPTION

Masking agent

5 Technical field

The present invention relates to a masking agent comprising a nontoxic salt of gluconic acid as an active ingredient, an oral ingestible product added with the masking agent, and a method of masking flavor or odor of an oral ingestible product by adding the masking agent.

Background Art

Tastes for oral ingestible product such as food and drink differ from person to person. In general, the tastes therefor tend to vary depending on various factors such as flavor and odor. Accordingly, even if food is excellent in nutritive value or advantageous in health maintenance/enhancement, it is sometimes disliked because of its unpleasant flavor and odor, and thus difficult to use.

For example, bitter gourd is effective in inhibiting sugar absorption and hot pepper is effective in promoting fat metabolism with its pungent component (capsaicin). Further, soya milk is a healthy drink which is a convenient supply source of soybean protein. However, they are often disliked because of bitterness, pungency and particular odor, respectively.

Polyunsaturated fatty acids contained in fish such as docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and the like are recognized as having functions good for health. However, they have a fishy smell and cannot easily be ingested in their